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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3095
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1388
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3436
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2822
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000516

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: KYRGYZSTAN: UZBEK AMBASSADOR DETAILS KYRGYZ ROLE
IN KHANABAD ATTACK

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Classified By: Amb. Tatiana Gfoeller, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Uzbek Ambassador Pulatkhodzhaev told the Ambassador May 27 that four or five Islamic Movement of Turkestan fighters of various nationalities had infiltrated Uzbekistan from Kyrgyzstan to carry out the May 26 attack in Khanabad. Referring to Kyrgyzstan as the "weak link" in Central Asia, the Uzbek Ambassador claimed that intense fighting in Afghanistan and Pakistan had led fighters to find "softer staging grounds" in Kyrgyzstan for their attacks. Pulatkhodzhaev reasoned that Afghanistan's continued destabilization should give Kyrgyz authorities grounds to reconsider their decision to close Manas Air Base, but also cautioned that security fears may push Bishkek more solidly into Moscow's embrace. By labeling Kyrgyzstan as a "weak" state incapable of controlling its territory, Tashkent may also be trying to develop leverage over Bishkek on land and water issues. End Summary.

Who Attacked Uzbekistan?

12. (C) The Ambassador met with Uzbek Ambassador Ziyadulla Pulatkhodzhaev May 27 to discuss the May 26 attack in Khanabad, Uzbekistan. Pulatkhodzhaev blamed it on fighters from the Islamic Movement of Turkestan (former Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan). He claimed the fighters had trained in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, and said they were of Afghan, Pakistani, Kyrgyz and Uzbek nationality. Pulatkhodzhaev said that the four or five fighters had been pushed back into Kyrgyzstan by Uzbek border personnel, after killing one policeman and injuring two other people. He added that one of the fighters later reentered Uzbekistan to carry out the suicide attack in Andijan.

The Afghanistan Connection

13. (C) Pulatkhodzhaev told the Ambassador that intensified fighting in Afghanistan and Pakistan had led the fighters to

seek "softer staging grounds" such as Kyrgyzstan for their operations. He said that the fighters had originally entered Kyrgyzstan on May 16 with an intent to carry out a "demonstrative act" to commemorate the May 2005 Andijan incident. More broadly, Pulatkhodzhaev argued that Afghanistan's destabilization was "seeping" into Central Asia.

Border Guard Training

¶4. (C) Referring to Kyrgyzstan as the "weak link" in Central Asia, Pulatkhodzhaev said that recent tension, to include a shooting incident involving Uzbek border guards, along the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border had arisen from efforts by Uzbek authorities to train their border guards. He added that Uzbekistan had anticipated some type of infiltration relating to the Andijan anniversary, and had been taking measures to "protect" the Uzbek border.

Impact on Manas Air Base

¶5. (C) Reflecting on Pulatkhodzhaev's expressed concern about Afghanistan's destabilization "seeping" into Central Asia, the Ambassador asked her Uzbek interlocutor whether it would make sense for the Kyrgyz to reconsider their decision on closing Manas Air Base in this environment. Pulatkhodzhaev agreed, but cautioned that Kyrgyz leaders use "dual track reasoning." For example, he said, the Kyrgyz want to close Manas Air Base, but also know they need to keep it open. At the Ambassador's suggestion, Pulatkhodzhaev said he would express to his Kyrgyz interlocutors his sense of the complicated developments in Afghanistan, the repercussions in

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Central Asia, and the role of Manas Air Base in countering this trend. However, he fretted that "Kyrgyzstan does not like advice from Uzbekistan."

The Role of Russia

¶6. (C) Reiterating his concern that Kyrgyzstan is Central Asia's "weakest link" yet again, Pulatkhodzhaev said Central Asian destabilization would push Kyrgyzstan closer to Russia because, he reasoned, Russia would be the only power able to protect Central Asia from Islamic Fundamentalism. He expressed displeasure at growing Russian influence, adding that Russia's pledge to finance construction of Kyrgyzstan's Kambarata-1 hydroelectric power station would extend Moscow's authority through control of hydropower resources. Together, Russian military might and domination of hydropower resources would strengthen Moscow's hold over Central Asia.

Comment

¶7. (C) Post has seen various reports detailing the May 26 attack near the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border in Uzbekistan. While Pulatkhodzhaev likely has an accurate accounting of the attack from sources in Uzbekistan, he may be trying to put an Uzbek spin on these incidents. Plus, reinforcing Uzbekistan's depiction of Kyrgyzstan as a weak state in the region and possibly blaming Kyrgyzstan for harboring terrorists may give Tashkent added leverage in confronting Bishkek over land and water issues in the future. It is worth noting, however, that Pulatkhodzhaev was unequivocal in his acknowledgement of the positive role Manas plays for regional stability, especially considering Afghanistan's deteriorating security situation.

GFOELLER